Since it was formed in 2004, the Canadian Tumour Repository Network (CTRNet) has pursued its overall mission to enhance the capacity and quality of biobanking through standardization and improvement of biobanking processes and frameworks. We have achieved many important contributions including: an open access biospecimen catalogue; an open source software system for biobanks (ATiM); a national biobank certification program; a comprehensive biobanking education course; an online Biobank Resource Centre providing templates, tools and services, operated in partnership with the University of British Columbia Office of Biobank Education and Research; and a set of 46 Standard Operating Procedures to enable biobanks to minimize the issue of variability in biobanking practices and improve quality.

One of the biggest enablers for CTRNet and its successes noted above are its partnerships. Working together with partner organizations, we have leveraged expertise and impact towards the common goal of improving health outcomes by achieving the highest quality of translational research. Key partner organizations include: The International Society for Biological and Environmental Repositories (www.isber.org); The International Society for Quality in Healthcare (www.isqua.org); the Terry Fox Research Institute (www.tfri.ca); and The University of British Columbia Office of Biobank Education and Research with which we have developed The Biobank Resource Centre profiled on page 4 (www.biobanking.org).

We value these partnerships greatly and thank their leaders for their ongoing collaboration. We invite you to visit their websites to learn more about these excellent organizations.
CTRNet’s Organizational Structure

Network Notes

Changes to CTRNet’s External Advisory Committee membership – We are fortunate to be joined by two new members of the External Advisory Committee (EAC): Dr. Stuart Edmonds, Vice President, Research, Health Promotion and Survivorship, Prostate Cancer Canada; and Dr. Christine Williams, Vice-President, Research, Canadian Cancer Society. Stepping down from the EAC is Dr. Mylène Deschênes, whose contributions are greatly appreciated.

Updated versions of the Required Operational Practices and glossary issued 31Jan2014 – They are available (in English and French) to those biobanks and individuals participating in CTRNet’s Biobank Certification program. To learn more, please visit www.ctrnet.ca/programbackground.

New Standard Operating Procedure on Return of Biospecimens for Clinical Purposes released – Available at http://www.ctrnet.ca/operating-procedures

CTRNet workshop at the upcoming TFRI Annual Scientific Meeting – Entitled, ‘Biospecimens: Where can I find them, how will I know if they are any good, and why should I care? Please visit the TFRI website for more information (http://www.tfri.ca/en/newsevents/event-registration.aspx).

CTRNet’s 2013 National Biobanking Workshop was a success – A full report on the proceedings and outcomes is publically available at www.ctrnet.ca/resources. For access to the complete workshop video recording, please visit the Biobank Resource Centre website (www.biobanking.ca).

Dr. Randy Johnston and his CBCF Tumor Bank team’s response during the 2013 Calgary floods was recently recounted for local news media – http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/Four%2Bmonth%2Blong%2BEffort%2BSaves%2Bpatients%2Bbiomedical%2Bsamples%2Bafter/9360795/story.html

Dr. Anne-Marie Mes-Masson and her team have moved to the new state of the art CHUM research centre facility – Please note their new mailing address: Centre de recherche CHUM, Tour Viger, 900 rue Saint-Denis R10.214, Montréal, Québec, H2X 0A9 (phone and email remain unchanged).
New Management Committee Members

Dr. Suzanne Vercauteren, MD, PhD
Hematological Pathologist
BC Children’s Hospital

Dr. Kathryn Graham, PhD
Translational Lab and Tumor Bank Manager, Edmonton node
Alberta Cancer Research Biorepository

Dr. Dominique Trudel
Staff pathologist and adjunct professor of clinical practice
Centre Hospitalier de l’Université de Montréal

The CTRNet Management Committee (CMC) is pleased to announce three new members: Drs. Kathryn Graham, Dominique Trudel and Suzanne Vercauteren. They join the pre-existing members, Drs. Brent Schacter, Peter Watson, Anne-Marie Mes-Masson, Randal Johnston, Leigh Murphy, John Bartlett and Lois Shepherd. Kathryn, Dominique and Suzanne each bring a wealth of tumour biobanking expertise that will enrich the important role that the CMC provides to CTRNet.

Dr. Kathryn Graham is a cell and molecular biologist who obtained her PhD in the Department of Medical Biophysics at the University of Toronto, Ontario Cancer Institute. Her postdoctoral training was at the University of Alberta where she studied molecular virology. Starting in 1995 she pursued translational cancer research in the Department of Oncology at the University of Alberta, Cross Cancer Institute. Her research interests include the expression of nucleoside transporter genes and in the analysis of gene expression signatures in breast cancer. Currently she manages the Edmonton node of the CBCF Tumour Bank and MicroArray Facility, a component of the Alberta Cancer Research Biorepository.

Dr. Dominique Trudel obtained her medical degree in Québec City at the Université Laval in 2005 while completing a master degree in Experimental Medicine in 2004 (combined MD/MSc program) working on biomarkers in prostate cancer. She completed her residency in Anatomical Pathology at the Université Laval in 2011. During her residency, she entered the Clinician-Investigator (CI) Program of the Royal College of Canada and she was appointed as residents’ representative in the CI Program. She completed her PhD in 2014, mainly investigating biomarkers in ovarian carcinoma. From 2011 to 2013, she worked in the area of prostate cancer as part of The Terry Fox Foundation Strategic Health Research Training Program in Cancer Research at CIHR-ICR (Molecular Oncologic Pathology). Effective January 2014, she commences clinical practice as a clinician scientist at the CHUM (Centre Hospitalier de l’Université de Montréal).

Dr. Suzanne Vercauteren is a hematological pathologist at BC Children’s Hospital who obtained her MD and PhD at the University of Utrecht, The Netherlands. She did her residency in hematological pathology at the University of British Columbia. She is the Director of BC Children’s Hospital BioBank as well as the Chair of the Childhood Cancer and Blood Research BioBank at BC Children’s Hospital. She participated in a “Permission to Contact” study with Dr. Peter Watson and is interested in increasing engagement and participation of pediatric patients in research studies. Currently she is the director of the clinical immunology laboratory and is engaged in researching and implementing tests to enhance patient’s care including the set-up of minimal residual disease testing for patients with acute leukemia.
Partner Profile – The UBC Office of Biobank Education and Research

In 2011, the University of British Columbia Office of Biobank Education and Research (OBER) was established as a partnership between UBC Department of Pathology and BC Cancer Agency. It has a core expert team experienced in both tumour and non-tumour disease-focused research biobanking, strong multi-disciplinary collaboration with key research leadership in both operations and societal aspects of biobanking, and input from the public, patient advocacy experts and ethics board stakeholders (http://pathology.ubc.ca/education-resource/ober/).

Together with CTRNet, OBER launched The Biospecimen Resource Centre (BRC) in May 2013 (www.biobanking.org). The BRC delivers biobanking tools and services that support researchers in establishing and operating biobanks. To date, 166 individuals have created accounts to receive a limited preview of the site and 24 individuals have paid for BRC membership for full access to the education, services, and tools. In addition, one Canadian research institution has signed up for an institutional membership to provide all biobanks at their site with access to the biobank education modules.

The following additions have recently been made to the BRC:

**Biobank Business Plan Template** – The BRC has created an institutional biobank business plan template. It is a substantial 45 page document with questions to guide those individuals who are planning a biobank with example text under headings such as Mission, Objectives, Governance, Management Plan, Operations Plan, Financial Plan (including a service pricing model and revenue model), Marketing and Communications Plan, Implementation Plan, Risk and Mitigation Strategies and more. It is available for purchase by request at the BRC website.

**Biospecimen User Fee Calculator** – Operating and maintaining a biobank is complex and determining how to accurately and consistently pass on the cost of biospecimens to a research user is a common issue for many biobanks. To address this issue a biospecimen user fee calculator has been created. This tool that incorporates the concepts of biobank classification, development phase, and operational activities. The tool allows for input of:

i) Annual operating and capital costs;
ii) Costs categorized by the major core biobanking operations (accrual, processing, storage, release);
iii) Specimen products requested by a biobank user;
iv) Services provided by the biobank beyond core operations (e.g. histology, tissue micro-array); and
v) Several user-defined variables to allow the calculator to be adapted to different biobank operational designs.

New tools are continuously being developed by the BRC so please check the website often (www.biobanking.org).
Interesting Publications and Articles


Upcoming Events and Important Dates

N2 Annual Meeting (Network of Networks) February 20 – 21
Toronto

Canadian Association of Pathologists 2014 Annual Meeting February 28
Abstract Submission deadline

CAREB/ACCER 2014 National Conference April 23 – 26
Montreal

NCIC CTG 2014 Annual Spring Meeting May 2-4
Toronto

TFRI Annual Scientific Meeting May 8-10
Montreal

ISBER Annual Meeting May 20-24
Orlando, Florida